



# EQUINE REPRODUCTION SVC

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## Researchers Study Uterine Torsion Outcomes

A pregnant mare exhibiting signs of colic could be suffering from a uterine torsion, an abnormally positioned uterus. And while this condition can prove fatal for both mare and foal, researchers have identified a procedure designed to correct torsions with good survival rates.

Tijn Spoormakers, DVM, cert. ISELP, Dipl. ECVS, a veterinary surgeon at Lingehoeve Diergeneeskunde, in The Netherlands, said that in the event of a uterine torsion (or UT), “the owner should be alarmed and the vet who examines the horse should perform a rectal examination. A uterine torsion can be diagnosed because the ligaments which cross during a uterine torsion can be palpated.”

Most torsions occur between nine and 10 months (before 320 days) of gestation. Torsions that occur earlier in the pregnancy generally self-correct because the foal is small and lightweight. The risk for uterine torsion decreases after 320 days when the foal is nearly grown and there’s less space in the uterus for rotation to occur.

Fortunately, most uterine torsions can be corrected. In their recent study, Spoormakers and colleagues compared several different correction procedures and recommended a standing flank laparotomy (SFL) as the technique of choice to correct uncomplicated uterine torsions prior to 320 days. With this procedure, “the pregnant mare is sedated and after anesthetizing the right or left flank, a small incision is made, and through this incision the uterine torsion is corrected manually when the mare is standing in stocks,” Spoormakers said. The other procedures evaluated included a midline or flank laparotomy under general anaesthesia and correction per vaginam, or through the vagina.

In evaluating the procedures’ cumulative success rates, the team determined that 90.5% of mares and 82.3% of foals survived to hospital discharge (three to 39 days after surgery) and foaling.

They also determined that:

- Foal survival was 88.7% after SFL compared with 35.0% after other methods;
- When UT occurred after Day 320 of gestation, 90.6% of foals survived, compared with 56.1% when UT occurred on Day 320 or earlier;
- Mare survival was 97.1% after SFL compared to 50.0% with other methods after 320 days of gestation.

Further, the team determined that corrected uterine torsions did not appear to have a negative impact on long-term fertility in the mare or increase her risk of future uterine torsions.